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3-1-2010

David Stories

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Recommended Citation
Katie Pratt, *David Stories*, 43 Loy. L.A. L. Rev. 719 (2010).
Available at: http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/llr/vol43/iss3/5

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Of course, David was the one supporting us. Sometimes I think that his gentle, non-stoic, friendly, and generous bearing in the face of death was a feat of nearly inhuman strength. He taught me so much at the end of his life. The rest of us rattle the doors, trying to break in and out of our fates like raging mad men. The trick is to emulate David, as much as one can, feeling both the overwhelming sense of world-pain that his death creates and trying to face it with grace.

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Professor Katie Pratt[8]

David Stories

David Leonard profoundly touched the lives of many people, including me. The extraordinary depth and breadth of the respect and love expressed for David since his death particularly struck me on the day after David died and again as I have read the "David stories" that so many people have submitted to the Loyola Law School tribute blog for David.

I learned of David's death about twenty minutes before I was scheduled to teach a large Business Associations class. I was not sure I would be able to teach the class because I was so distraught, but thinking about David and how he continued his teaching and service throughout his illness inspired me to go forward with the class. During the first hour of the two-hour class, I felt strangely disconnected from the words going back and forth between my students and me. At the ten-minute break in the middle of the class, I took a deep breath and tried to clear my mind.

Toward the end of the break, one of my students, Anna, approached me. She apologized for being upset and explained that she had just learned about David's death. As she recounted a story about the kind, generous way in which David had helped her with

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her law review note, we both started to cry. When the other students returning from the break saw the two of us, huddled together and crying at the front of the classroom, I decided that an explanation was required. When I told the students that David had died, they looked stunned, and a hush fell over the room. The feeling of collective sadness and grief was palpable. Trying to lighten the mood a bit, I said, "I promise not to cry every day in class." The students laughed, and we continued the class.

At the end of class, other students spontaneously came forward to tell their own David stories. Although the details of each student's David story varied, there was a commonality to them—David's compassion and generosity, his concern for others, his ability to listen closely and make a person feel special, his quirky sense of humor, and his intelligence and wit. I was struck by the depth and breadth of the feelings expressed for David.

After class, I suggested to the law school deans that we create an electronic tribute site where those of us whose lives David had touched could gather and share our David stories. Dean Gold established the site immediately. Many of us from David's various communities have gathered there to honor David, tell our stories, and mourn his passing. If you have a David story and have not yet shared it, you can go to this tribute blog site and submit it for the collection: http://blog.lls.edu/facultyblog/2010/02/memories_of_david_leonard.html#comments.

My own David story is the story of a colleague, friend, and fellow cancer patient. David was an exceptional colleague and administrator. He worked tirelessly to advance the mission of the law school and was an outstanding teacher and scholar. He always will be an essential part of the law school. David also was a valued friend and a wonderfully generous, funny human being. Soon after I arrived at Loyola fifteen years ago, David earned a spot on my "top ten human beings I have known" list. He has been there ever since.

My friendship with David took on a new dimension after David and I both were diagnosed with cancer. When I received my diagnosis, David called me immediately to offer help and support, notwithstanding the fact that he was undergoing cancer treatment himself.

Our shared cancer experiences made us kindred spirits. Any time I went to the law school deans' suite about some law school matter, I would pop my head into David's office. Sometimes we simply gave each other a smile and hello, but frequently the hello led to an impromptu conversation. Sometimes the conversations were lighthearted and about nothing of import, but we also had conversations in which we commiserated about our cancer experiences. We could be quite direct and honest with each other about life during cancer treatment, which was so refreshing because most people who have not been through cancer treatment are uncomfortable talking about it. David and I talked about our doctors, our treatment regimens and test results, how we were managing our care, how much information we were comfortable sharing with our various communities, and how much it helped each of us that we were supported by our spouses, families, friends, and communities. We talked about trying to live life fully in the midst of treatment, and—David being David—we joked about some of the more surreal aspects of our cancer experiences.

David provided support and expressed his concern with words, but also without words. His presence was accepting and reassuring. He did not shrink from other people's difficulties. I could feel this, whether we were actually talking about our cancer experiences, or just sitting together at a faculty workshop, or even greeting each other casually on the law school courtyard.

David's compassion, ability to listen, and ability to witness the struggles of another human being helped me immeasurably. He had a rare ability to understand the internal state of another person. His support and friendship were a great comfort to me. I hope he also felt my support and friendship. Parker Palmer, in describing the way in which a friend had helped him through a bout of clinical depression, captures the spirit of the way in which David helped and supported others, including me:

> [H]is words were deeply helpful: they reassured me that I could still be seen by *someone*—life-giving knowledge in the midst of an experience that makes one feels annihilated and invisible. It is impossible to put into words what my friend's ministry meant to me . . . .

> The poet Rainer Maria Rilke says, 'love . . . consists in this, that two solitudes protect and border and salute each other.' That is the kind of love my friend . . . offered. He never tried to invade my awful inwardness with false comfort or advice; he simply stood on its boundaries, modeling the respect for me and my journey—and the courage to let it be—that I needed . . . ."[9]

Reading the David stories posted by so many people on the Loyola tribute blog, I am struck again by the depth and breadth of the respect and love expressed for David. Our stories remind us that the loss of David is a very great loss—yet in our stories David's spirit lives on.

> *[A] billion stars go spinning through the night,*
> *Blazing high above your head.*
> *But in you is the presence that*
> *Will be, when all the stars are dead.*[10]

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Professor Marcy Strauss[11]

David Leonard was my colleague and my friend. It is his role as a friend—David Leonard the person, not the esteemed scholar, teacher and Dean—where I want to focus my comments.

My friendship with David blossomed largely as a result of a few "business" trips to Las Vegas that I took once a year for the last few years with David and Victor Gold. Well, Victor went on business, David and I sacrificed ourselves to go along so Victor wouldn't be lonely! Away from Loyola Law school—over dinners, at shows, and yes, hunched over 25-cent poker machines, here's what I learned about David the person.

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9. PARKER J. PALMER, LET YOUR LIFE SPEAK 64 (2000) (citation omitted).

10. *Buddha in Glory, in* AHEAD OF ALL PARTING: THE SELECTED POETRY AND PROSE OF RAINER MARIA RILKE 75 (Stephen Mitchell ed., 1995).

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